



For Immediate Release

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Comprehensive Cancer Program

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UCAN Urges Teachers to Fight Skin Cancer By Teaching Sun Safety *Free Curriculum and Teaching Aids Available to Educators*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Cancer Action Network is launching a grassroots campaign to urge teachers to teach sun safety at home and in schools. Data from the most recent Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance Survey show that 65 percent of Utah's population is at risk for skin cancer because they do not regularly use sunscreen or cover up with clothing. Utah's high altitude, predominantly fair-complexioned population and frequent sunny days combine to put Utah's children at higher risk for skin cancer.

"If you knew there was an epidemic spreading throughout your child's school, you would do everything possible to prevent it," said Bronwen Calver, UCAN spokesperson at the Utah Department of Health. "But when the epidemic is silent and the health consequences don't take place until much later in life, it doesn't seem like such a threat."

UCAN will be notifying teachers and PTA members about free curriculum and teaching tools available on the Internet. The curricula include the Environmental Protection Agency's *Sunwise* program, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Excite Sun Safety Model*, and others.

Web sites include lesson plans for different age levels and some suggest ways to integrate sun safety messages into courses of study including health, science and math. All of these programs are linked through www.ucan.cc. Clicking on the *Resources for Schools* link brings up a list of skin cancer curriculum. Some can be downloaded immediately, and there are free videos and tool kits that can be ordered online or by calling a toll free number. UCAN even has its own downloadable teaching aids including a "Sun Guy and Cloud Guy" coloring sheet based on the popular TV commercial, bulletin board graphics and sun safety facts.

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“Many children are being exposed to the sun’s deadly UV rays every day, and a little sunburn doesn’t seem like such a bad thing. But fast forward 20 years and these grown children will be more likely to get melanoma because their skins were unprotected as youth,” said Calver.

UCAN’s goal is to mobilize Utah’s parents and teachers to emphasize sun safety to Utah’s children year round. Calver encourages teachers to explore these lesson plans and to order the special teaching tools because sometimes it can take a couple of months to receive the materials.

Skin cancer has been declared the nation’s silent epidemic by the American Academy of Dermatology because more than half of all new cancers are skin cancers. The annual rate of melanoma in the US is increasing by three percent each year, which is faster than most other cancers. Utah’s melanoma rates are fifth highest in the nation and nearly 60 Utahns die every year from the disease.

About UCAN

UCAN is comprised of 75 community partners including private and non-profit agencies, hospitals, universities, UDOH, The American Cancer Society and Huntsman Cancer Institute. UCAN is funded by grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This information and other important tips and links to skin cancer prevention Web sites are available at www.ucan.cc, or by calling 1-888-222-2542.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.